SUFEISM IN ISLAM

Lectures on Mystic side of Islam delivered in different towns in England.

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TO BE AT ONE WITH GOD

(Sermon at the New Life Centre Church, London)

"God sayeth, The person I hold beloved, I am his hearing by which he heareth, and I am his sight by which he seeth, and I am his hand by which he holdeth, and I am his feet by which he walketh.

" God sayeth, O man ! only follow thou My laws, and thou shalt become like unto Me, and then say 'Be,' and behold, 'It is.'"

(HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD.)

In these portentous words God spoke from the mouth of the prophet Muhammad some thirteen hundred years ago. Whatever had been said in similes and metaphors or spoken in mystic language by those gone before him—Jesus, Moses, and other prophets—received lucid formulations in these simple words. These significant words put before the whole world in unmistakable accents the ultimate aim of the God-sent religion. All religions in their original form came from God, and were one and the same. Human interpolation came to cause divergence. They indicate that state of spiritual perfection in which all Godwards human progress culminates. Ever since the dawn of life the world has received, time and again, in human

form, a practical demonstration of this phenomena. Muhammad, Moses, Jesus (may they be glorified), and many more of the blessed race of teachers, were raised to exemplify through the perfection of their lives the straight road to that goal. They did their part well. But alas! those who professed to follow them went astray. Some of the teachers were taken for God, although they were not free from all those infirmities which is the lot of all mortals. But for the clearest and most unequivocal expressions that came from the lips of Holy Muhammad—the best and final exponent of the unity of God—undoubtedly he too would have been worshipped as one equal to God. What in the way of the transcendental purity of the teaching he brought, the miracles he performed, and the life he lived, the achievements of the Man Muhammad and the Prophet Muhammad seem to surpass the deeds of other guides of humanity. In the presence of these evidences, the authenticity of which has always stood above impeachment, a character likeMuhammad could not fail to have been accepted as "Fathers," if others were taken as "Sons," in a credulous world, but for his emphatic and oft-repeated denial to associate anything with his name save the title of the Messenger of God. The Muslim world was saved the degradation of taking an exemplar for the deity.

Do not think our God is "a jealous God" if His unity has been the chief theme of the Qur-án. Belief in oneness of God creates the idea of equality and likeness between man and man. He whom you have

taken as a god for some of his seemingly unique achievements, becomes your equal, and his acquisition potentially comes within your reach. In his person a true ideal stands before you and opens a splendid vista of shining hopes and glorious possibilities before your eyes. Jesus used to do wonders—a common acquisition of the prophets—and he did not deny the capability of others to do the same. "I am only a man like you" (the Qur-án), so says the noble Expounder of the Unity of God. "One may not reach the top of the ladder the prophet is standing upon, but his thrilling words dispel all clouds of doubt enveloping my capabilities, and open a gateway to hope and success. He assures me that he and I are potentially alike, sharing in each other's aspirations and desires, and equally subject to human shortcomings.* And so did Jesus, but credulity and ignorance would ignore

* The idea of prophethood should not be confused with the idea of the equality of man. The very verse in the Qur-án in which this gospel of equality of man was given to us makes prophethood and other human achievements as two distinct things:—

"Say, I am only a mortal like you; *it is revealed to me* that your God is one God" (xviii. 110).

Divine messengership—which prophethood technically means—i.e. to bring message of guidance from God to man for his uplift—is a divine selection, and therefore a gift and not an acquisition. It is deputation and not achievement, that it may be open to every one as the Qur-án says:—

"Allah best knows where He placesHis message"(VI. 125.)

If the message has become complete and the guidance has reached its perfection, as Muslims believe about the Qur-án, the door on prophethood should become closed. It, however, should not be confused with power to receive revelations from God. To speak to God and to be spoken to by Him is a Muslim goal, and is open to every human being. The Qur-án reveals all that code of life which makes man recipient of this Divine blessing.

this patent fact and would father on him what he clearly denied. Jesus may or may not be a deity ; his utility to us as a pattern of humanity is next to nil if he is so, as nothing could make us Divine in that sense. In short, these prophets were evolved images of God and acted as pattern for others. Thay became Divine, but within the four walls of humanity. This is the main purpose of religion which has been so lucidly put by the Prophet in these words: "God sayeth, The person I hold beloved, I am his hearing by which he heareth, and I am his sight by which he seeth, and I am his hand by which he holdeth, and I am his feet by which he walketh." There is also a report according to which Almighty God said: "*I loved that I should be known, so I created man.*' Hence the creation of man- or more properly of the perfect man—in the image of the Divine Being, is due to the attribute of love in Him. This attribute is the groundwork of mysticism in Islam.

How to attain that stage of spirituality so that I may become beloved of God? Can I ever endear myself to my God by offering to Him so many tributes of my lip-gratitude, by sitting in a circle and repeating so many formulas of faith in just words, and by counting His names on the beads of my rosary ? They may help me in a way, they may help my mind to a certain limit, but beyond that they are of no avail, and even after the lapse of time the habit takes the better of me and the repetition of a formula becomes a mechanical work. The spirit and the soul which it created in me

have departed. My sitting in a circle and counting of my rosary beads are like the revolutions ot the Buddhist Lama's prayer-wheel, every revolution of which is taken as equal to so many hundred citations of the Holy Name. Thus they complete the numbers of the prayers they are supposed to offer to their Deity. Repetitions of prayers and incantations of Divine names are just a preparation; but something more is needed to draw Divine love. Do we not see all around us that it is through attraction that things combine together and bring forth desirable results? It is through the law of affinities that these wonders manifest themselves in the world. Atmosphere is laden with raindrops, but they are simply attracted to the sphere where the surface below is overgrown with trees. This phenomenon is one of the numerous evidences of the presence of Divine love which pervades like the electrons in the four corners of the universe. But we need a conductor in us to attract this spark of Divine love towards us. We need to have love to draw love. To be beleved of God, one has to love Him in the first place with all heart and soul. To the same effect "God saith," in the words of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, "whoso seeketh to approach one span, I seek to approach one cubit; and whoso seeketh to approach one cubit, I seek to approach him two fathoms; and whoso walketh towards Me. I run towards him." Such is our God. His grace comes to us, but it follows our action hundredfold. Love Him, and you will be His beloved.

But what is this love after all? A word on the tip of every tongue, a passion experienced by every soul more or less, but very difficult to be truly understood in relation to God. Arabic language has the remarkable beauty of describing exactly the significance of things which its words are supposed to represent. In it the two words "Khullat" and "Hubb," mean friendship and love. The former means to be vacant and the latter to fill. A little reflection over the meaning of both these would reveal the process of love. It demands emptying from one thing and filling with another thing. If your soul is lovelorn, then there is scarcely any room in it for any other object of adoration. How can you love God if your mind is already full of things ungodly? "There are some among men who take for themselves objects of worship besides Allah (God), whom they love as they love Allah — and those who believe are stronger in love for Allah" (The Qur-án, ii. 165). In these words man's love for God, which is the real basis of Islam—absolute submission to the Divine Being—is declared to be stronger than all other ties of love and friendship, including that which unites a man to his object of adoration.* In order that we might have our heart and soul permeated with Divine love it is essential that it were made absolutely vacant of any other object than that which appertains to our "Lord." Unless the heart is completely

* These words give a direct lie to the allegation that love of God does not form the basis of the religion of Islam.—Ed.

steeped in the thought of our God one cannot experience the blessings that come to men through that love of God. Let me be more personal. Have you ever genuinely loved some one? If you have, then think of the moments of your intensified passions, of your love towards your sweetheart. Think of the moments when she or he, as the case may be, engrossed all your attention. You are by yourself, feeling the presence of your adored one; you begin to talk to this imaginary presence. You are believed to have gone mad. But it is not so. This condition is only an indication of the fact that your whole being is drenched in the thoughts of your love, that you constantly have an image of your sweetheart before your mental eyes. Have you ever intensified your love for God to that degree? If not, how can you expect Him to be your eyes and hands and other limbs and joints? When you feel you are absolutely so much gone over your devotion towards a mortal, a merely earthly being, you can easily find out the degree of your attachment towards a much higher Being. Do you not know that the best way to please your adored one is to totally subject your wishes to that person, to give up your way of thinking and adopt his or her mode of thought? It is that ultimate stage of love in which the lover totally annihilates his own self on the altar of the love for the object of his devotion.

Jesus did attain that ultimate and the highest degree of his love for the Father. He cheerfully bore every hardship that stood in his way and did not

shrink even from going to the cross. Are we ready for such a stupendous sacrifice? Are we prepared to imitate him, to follow him in bearing our own cross as he bore his? I am afraid not! We are decidedly unprepared for such an eventuality, however voluble our tongues in singing loud pæans of praise to the love and glory of the Lord. The coward in us is trying every moment of our lives to avoid every little hardship or difficulty. That is why it has created ingenious devices of "Intercession," "Redemption," or "Atonement." These are, so to say, short-cuts by which a futile effort is made to reach the goal of salvation without having to bear the trials and sufferings essential to that end. Does it sound like loving God? Then why hanker after His love for you when you have never deserved it? Let me take another instance of man's anxiety to shirk genuine effort. I presume you have heard of the Philosopher's Stone in whose quest generations of men in Mediæval East and West wasted their lives, because the stone was supposed to transmute by just its touch the basest metal into sterling gold. Failure after failure has, however, brought home to us the absurdity of our belief in the Philosopher's Stone in the matter of metals. But in other respects we are still duped. We are after the same quest in matters spiritual. Our coward shirks labour and wants to reap a good harvest—harvest without even tilling the ground. He is in search of another Philosopher's Stone, which he thinks he has found in the name of Atonement. "Actions are no

good, law is a curse, but belief in the Cross miraculously transmutes the base into noble." It is the same old story of man's unwillingness to deserve after doing something. the same empty longing of the easy going to have everything without doing anything. He is anxious to avoid the consequences of all his dirty deeds; he wishes to do whatever his low desires prompt him to do, but he wants to burden another in consequence; hence his belief in atonement. If the Philosopher's Stone is a mediæval age myth, such beliefs as atonement, etc., do also come from the same source.

But we can convert our honest labour into glittering gold, likewise we are endowed with the fullest capacities to attain spiritual felicity and Divine beatitude, provided there is will to do and to make personal effort to gain them. If we could never believe in there being any Philosopher's Stone, then we must bear in mind that there is no reality in any theory or dogma of spiritual transmutation as well. If we sincerely desire to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, then, in the words of Jesus, we could only do so by keeping the commandments. Can we reasonably point out to ourselves a single expression of Jesus indicating his bearing the cross in order to absolve us absolutely from the consequences of our sins? On the other hand, his plain exhortation to us is, "If you wish to be worthy of my name, bear your own cross." He was crucified in order that he might bring home to us the lesson of individual personal service. This is the topmost stage

of Divine love, in which the giving away of his life by the adorer is of no great consequence to gain the goodwill of the Beloved. But do not be misled by words, for this misunderstanding of words has been the source of endless waste of life on the altar of the Almighty in the form of human sacrifice so common in the riligions of mythology. The sacrifice of flesh and blood is merely symbolic of the sacrifice of our soul, our volition which rules our flesh and blood. Kill all your personal passions, your selfish desires. Let your life and your death be for Him. Kill all those passions and inclinations that arise from flesh and blood. Subordinate your judgment to that of the one Most High. Let "Thy will, not mine," be the rule of your life. When you assume this attitude of absolute self-surrender then you attain indeed the goal of Divine Love. How beautifully has the prophet of Islam demonstrated this truth, "Mùtù qabla anta mùtú" ("Die before you die"), i.e. detach yourself from all those things which your soul and body conjointly demand before your soul is detached from your body; for in fact all these things are quite foreign to the essence of your soul.

It was this truth, this great principle, which was enunciated by John the Baptist: "I indeed baptize you with *water unto repentance,* but he that cometh after me . . . he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost *and with fire*" (Matt iii. 11).

How true are these words! But to our great misfortune the coward in us did not realize their signifi-

cance. There were those who thought and readily believed that a dip in water furnished the necessary absolution from sin and produced a new nature in us. They could not understand what baptism with water meant and what baptism with fire constituted. These worshippers of symbolism are even inconsistent in their beliefs and actions. If by baptism of fire they understood their belief in Jesus, then they ought to have babtized themselves in fire rather than in water. They ought to have poured hot embers on their head instead of pouring water. But this is all make-believe. John spoke the literal truth when he uttered those words. Why he used similes and parables was due to the immature intellect of the generation he was addressing. The words of Holy Al Qur-án and those of the Holy Prophet are an improvement upon old methods which put all truth before men in the simplest and easiest expressions. Al Qur-án expresses itself in the following on the subject:—

" Receive the colour (baptism) of Allah, and who is better than Allah in giving colour (baptism)?" (ii.138)

When you desire to dye any fabric, you have in the first place to wash it and free it from all spots and stains. Similarly, in order that the linen of your heart be thoroughly dyed in the colour of God, then you must bear in mind that this process would never be successful unless you removed from it all blemishes, the result of its being saturated in low worldly desires. You have to use freely of the water which would remove all these blemishes. This water is of "repen-

tance." Reflect on the words of John the Baptist. His baptism is baptism of water, i.e. of repentance—a preparation to receive colour of God, but the baptism of the Coming One was of dye or of fire: both mean the same thing and both refer to the same Comforter who was to come after Jesus. When a piece of cloth is dyed it loses all traces of its original colour; likewise everything which is put into fire assumes the appearance and attributes of fire. This is the right form of the baptism in the Spirit of God. We do not need the blood of any other to wash off our past sins. We have to wash our own linen first with water and then to soak it in the deep dye. We cannot plunge into fire to become part of it unless all the dross in us is consumed. If belief in the power of fire to cleanse gold of alloy is of no avail unless gold is put into fire, our belief in any dogma cannot purify our soul; we shall have to plunge ourselves into a burning fire. Baptism by fire or baptism by colour, call it what you will, it is only a metaphorical expression to indicate the process of the cleansing of mind from all dross, and saturating its every nook and corner, its every cavity and recess, with the colour of the Lord.

Idolatry and worship of stone images are things of the past, although other things have taken their place in the Church in the West. But we are slaves to something still worse. We worship those vile and low motives and other similar passions. We have made our low desires as our God. Our carnal desires, partial satisfaction of which was necessary to keep soul

and body together in order to make further progress which our Creator has meant for us on this plane, has taken better of us. We worsh p them day and night. Study your inner self,and see if your mind is free from them. If it is, then you have certainly given access to the spirit of God in you; your heart is now become His very throne, your body is His tabernacle where He alone is the object of your worship; then indeed you love God. Nay! God loves you. Then indeed He is your hand, and He is your feet. Miracles are easy to work at this stage, but they are an indication of the presence of the Lord in you and not an evidence of your Divinity. You have perfected your course of humanity, and have given birth to Divine mind, you have given manifestation to Divine attributes in the garb of humanity. But you are still man.

"NOTHING IS LIKE A LIKENESS OF HIM" (The Qur-án). "So transcendent is the Divine Being, and so far above all material conception, that a likeness of Him cannot be imagined even metaphorically; for not only is nothing *like Him*, but, as stated in the Qur-án, *nothing* is like a likeness of Him. Such is the transcendentally pure conception of the Divine Being in Islam. He is not only above all material limitations, but even *above the limitation of metaphor*.

Working miracles makes not one Divine. It needs self annihilation; therfore kill your ego. Jesus did never bear the cross but for his own Self, for his own elevation.Through the gateway of pain and tribulation he pleased his Father and became one of the

chosen. He laid before us, no doubt, a wonderful lesson. He showed us the way, that the attainment of Divine Love lay only through bearing our own cross. The sacrifice of our physical being is a difficult thing indeed, but much more difficult is the surrender of our ignoble desires in the service of God; therefore give up yourself, your soul, all your worldly gains, all motives of expediency, in the furtherance of your low desires, and you attain that height whence Holy Muhammad proclaimed :—

"Say surely, my prayer and my sacrifice, and my life, and my breath are all for Allah. the Lord of the worlds (the Creator of all nations, the Sustainer of all races, and the Cherisher of His creatures). No associate has He, and this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit.—THE QUR-AN, chap. iv. 163—4.

DEVOTIONAL INDIA

Address by Khawaja Kamal-ud-Din at 7-8 the Galleries, Old Bond Street, Mr. Marmaduke Pickthall being in the chair.

INDIA has always been designated a land of diversities and disparties. She is supposed to be not one country and a single nation, but a conglomeration of countries and communities. Perhaps to an outsider these may appear to be her only features. But to those whose home is India, this beautiful land is not altogether devoid of the features of harmony, and chief among them is its spirit of devotion, its religious life. It pervades India's temples, shrines and mosques alike. It is the one common source whence India draws upon for the continuance of her devotional life.

Western culture, with its atheistic tendencies, arrived on this scene of religious calm and spiritual contentment, and made its first onslaught on the daily life of the people. Its material advancement bewitched us, and its surface glare dazzled our visions. It staggered our steps, and we began to grope in the darkness of scepticism, but fortunately for the motherland, certain factors began to work very soon, which resulted in a great revival of the old spirit. Harmony in religion and moderism was restored. Men from the Universities steeped in the theories of modern sciences

and learning again found their peace in mosques and temples, and scientific experiments when hand in hand with religious practices Again the call of the crier from the minaret of the mosque claimed response from education and culture. and the sacred banks of the Ganges teemed with men from universities. Need I remind you here of a remark made by an Anglo-Indian daily of India which ran : that the liberal education, which in Western universities produced discontent with the Church and revolt against religion, amongst Muslims in India it produced a strengthened and intelligent faith in the tenets of Islam.

In the early hours of the morning when luxury, tired of bestiality, finds rest in cosy beds, we hear beatings of drums, chimings of bells, and blowing of shell-horns inviting the votaries to their respective temples and shrines. From the top of the mosques comes the shrill cry piercing the stillness of the early dawn. "God is Great! God is Great! There is no other Deity,—Man or God incarnate—but one God, and Muhammad brings you a message (that if you) hasten to prayer (you) hasten towards prosperity. Prayer to God is better than sleep ; (as) God is Great, God is Great, and no other object of worship, but one Allah".

There is no distinction between the Lord's day and the week-days for an Indian mind. Its places dedicated to worship open their arms to the votaries every morning and evening. If mundane affairs absorb our attentions and energies day and night, have not

the spiritual affairs exactly the same claim on us ; and did not the words of Jesus, known to the West, repeat the same thing. " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. iv 3, 4.)

Have these words lost all their meaning and import for those who profess to follow them ? Only the other day I happened to be in a very enlightened conversation with a gifted lady, when I remarked to her that we Muslims believe ourselves to be much better Christians than the Christians themselves. To substantiate this, I would refer again to Jesus Christ—that man lives more by every word that proceeds out of the lips of God. A Muslim, when he leaves his bed, before taking his early tea, must go to his God, and must live on these words that proceeded from His Holy Mouth, by reciting the prayers revealed to him through the Messenger of God. Lunch time comes and he hastens to his place of worship before going to his table. His afternoon tea must again be preceded by his prayer. At sunset he again makes his obeisance to his Maker, for under no conditions would he put his inner man above the soul of Allah. You take your late tea with biscuits and wine before you go to bed, but you will find a Muslim, before he retires to his rest, sometimes standing with hands folded on his breast, sometimes on his knees, sometimes bowing, and sometimes prostrating with his head, the only sign of earthly respect and self effacement before his Sweetheart. Lovelorn as a Muslim is, what

will he not do in showing his devotion to that great Beauty Whose charms surpass every other object of adoration. Call them religious cranks if you will, and subject to religious mania, but are you free from your manias ? Have you not got your own objects of adoration and devotion, and let us see which of the two is wiser ?

Devotion is nothing but an intense degree of love, and love must follow beauty and beneficence, and who is more beneficent than that great source of all benevolence and grace ? And what else is beauty but another name of beneficence. Do you see beauty only in a charming face with black gazelle eyes, aquiline nose, jet black glossy curls, prominent forehead, and (allow me to use Eastern similes) a cypress-like stature. Yes, these features were signs of beauty in green days of my youth. They have become the commonplace. Now new passions and new aspirations find new objects of adoration, and with them my conception of beauty changes. Nothing in itself is beauty. It is just that which satisfies your hankering, your heart, and your soul. It is a desire of heart which finds beauty in different objects. And desire arises from need. In our immature years the sense of beauty is undeveloped, and consequently the scope of finding it is limited. Experience and observation expand our knowledge of needs and it is one who satisfies those needs that we call beautiful. Thus, in the long run our benefactor becomes beauty and our object of adoration. Make a survey of your needs and their corresponding means of

satisfaction which God has created. Who else can be a greater beauty than the Universal Providence ? Who else can claim more devotion from you than the Author of your very existence ? Be true to your nature, and your week days would become your Lord's day, in fact every hour of your existence would remind you of your Creator. You would then become worthy of the name of Christ, when, like Muslims, each word from the lips of God would become your diet, and you would attain real felicity and success. The whole world with you will reap prosperity, and the Kingdom of Heaven will be established on this earth. The followers of the noble Prophet have not been wrongly taught to cry five times every day from the top of the Mosque, "Hasten to prayer (if you) hasten to prosperity and success".

Have you ever cared to realize what devotion means, what is its beginning, and what its final stage? Almost all of you, I presume, have had experience of the passion of love, and have a sweetheart. What will you not do to please your sweetheart ? You will leave no stone unturned to carry out the will of your "love," and this is only the first stage of devotion. Jesus initiated us into this first stage of devotion to God when he taught us in his prayer : "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." This, I say, is the first step of the ladder which leads to the final goal of humanity ; and which is to lose our individuality and merge ourselves into that Great Self. As the Holy Prophet Muhammad said : " Takhallaqu be akhla-

qallah." Imbue yourself with Divine attributes. Divest yourself of your own personality, and clothe it with Divine Morals. Thus if Jesus taught us the first step of devotion to God, Muhammad came to lead us to its perfection. If I say so, I do not mean to make any invidious distinction. Far be it from a Muslim to do so. He has been enjoined in his Holy Book to make no distinction between a Prophet and a Prophet. *Prophets always speak and inculcate truths up to the intellectual standard of their hearers. Jesus found himself amongst washermen and fishermen. He had often to complain of their low intelligence, and for this very reason he was forced to speak to them in parables and similes. But Muhammad (peace be upon both) came at a time when the world, through his teaching, was to experience a sudden upheaval of learning and culture within a short time of his ministry. If Jesus, therefore, only initiated us to mysteries of love and devotion to God, Muhammad carried us to its goal. And has not Jesus said the same thing of Muhammad:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come"—John xvi. 12, 13.

* Cf. "We do not make any distinction between any of them—Prophets," Chap. ii. v. 137 Al-Quran.

DEVOTION does not mean only singing of hymns, or reciting certain words, and going through other movement of hands and body. These are only index of what the mind feels. Devotion, as I said before, in its initial stage consists in subordinating our own will to that High Will and to have "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Is it now difficult to find what is His will in the Heavens, and, to shorten the scope of discussion, His will concerning various members of humanity? Is not His Providence universal? Does he not make no distinction between man and man and race and race in His physical and spiritual dispensation? Has He not given same limbs and joints, same hand and heart, to everybody? Has not every atom in the Universe been created to serve equally to the needs of every child of humanity? He is the Universal Father equally interested in the welfare and growth of every "son of man." He who is His real worshipper and devoted lover cannot but further the cause of humanity. He must co-operate with the Master to work out his scheme of universal Providence. Could we, then, imagine that there would be left any ignoble and selfish motive of competition in society if the true spirit of devotion permeated it? Man, with such a spirit, would regard even co-operation as something below his dignity. If selfishness prompts competion, spirit of "give-and-take" is after all at the root of co-operation. One devoted to the Universal Father only believes in service. If I am devoted to my God, who

is " Rabbul Alamin", the Creator, the Nourisher, and Sustainer of all races, nations and tribes, and these are the words in which Muslim has to address his God when at his prayers, how can I go out sword in hand and devastate and destroy in order to weaken and crush other races whose uplift is the concern of the Great Evolver ?

There is another aspect of the question, how a devotional spirit helps general human welfare. Devotion entails self-effacement. Through various kinds of self denials you lose your own individuality and prepare yourself to be in union with the Most High. Buddha said the same thing when he taught that "*Nirvana*" i.e. self-annihilation—was salvation. Islam which is the name of my religion, literally means resignation to Divine will. Create a sacrifical spirit in individuals and evil itself will be an exile. Evil was neither original nor innate in your nature. It was an accretion and an acquisition. Sin is the child of selfishness and an offspring of covetousness. Have you ever studied the psychology of a criminal's mind ? Look through the penal code of any country and you will trace 99 per cent of offences mentioned in it to desire to covet the belongings of others. Punishment is no remedy. It may act as a deterrent. The only cure lies in creating a self-denying spirit, and it can only be cultivated through the spirit of devotion. A self-sacrificing spirit works for the benefit of others. He feels happy and content when his earnings go to the benefit of others. He lives for others. He cannot

therefore afford to covet the belongings of others. Cultivate this spirit of devotion—i.e. the spirit of sacrifice—you kill avarice and so close the fountain-head of every form of evil. Create this spirit, and again, I say, you abolish prisons and the police. Am I speaking of a Utopia, or lecturing you in idealism ? No, certainly not. Go to Muhammad. Sit at his feet and you will realize the truth of my statement. Ask my brother in faith in the chair. He is well versed in the History of Islam and he will tell you that the Holy Prophet of Islam in his latter days at Medina could establish a regime without police and prison, when sin became extinct and offence rare, and the Kingdom of God was established on earth.

I was just speaking of the final stage of devotion, i.e.,to lose your individuality into that great Personality and I also remarked that self-renunciation is the only gateway through which every devotee has to pass before realizing that Truth. To attain it, various systems were introduced by various teachers suiting various times and climes. Different monastic orders and diverse ascetic austerities were introduced to kill carnal nature. People left their homes for jungles and mountains to secure detachment from worldly affairs, which is a great distraction, and to secure the true spirit of contemplation. Swamees and sadhus had special practices in olden days in India to control evil passions and desire. The object was noble,but it demanded isolation and banishment of all sociability—the one gift to man from God He made us interdependent

and sociable. Shunning of society would go therefore against His Will, as it would deprive your fellow-being of the use of certain gifts which perhaps were given to you by God. Besides, the real spirit of self-renunciation finds its full growth only in society and not in hermitage. A hermit may deprive himself of some of the benefits of society, but the real control of passions and desires can only be achieved when you are amongst contraries and contradictories, coming forth from other members of society. Every hour of your life you are surrounded with rebuffs and reverses, and when you face them manfully you cultivate the spirit of self-control, without which self-renunciation is an impossiblility. Therefore, for this reason Islam forbade monasticism and celibacy, and enjoined all to lead a married life. Remember ! Family life is the nursery of the sacrificial spirit. Affection to your children and to your family compels you to part with your own comfort and pleasure in the interest and for the benefit of others. This very spirit is to be maintained in relation to your neighbours, to your countrymen, and then to your fellowmen without distinction of race and colour, and you have achieved the mould of mind which will bring forth fruit of real devotion. Islam, however, came at a time when the wordly affairs had to assume a new aspect and when monasticism was not any more desirable. It came with its simple ways to attain the object of devotion without disregarding social obligation and mundane duties. Through his constant prayers and fasting, through his various charities and

pilgrimages, and through other religious practices,a Muslim tries to control his passions and balance his desires, and create in him a mind engrossed in love and devotion. In serving humanity he serves his Creator. With serenity of mind, he faces all ups and downs of life. His days are with men, but his nights are with God. In the first hour of the morning he has left his bed, he has taken his bath and made his ablutions, he has said his prayers and invoked Divine help ; while sitting on his mattress with eyes closed he is deep down in meditation—contemplating on those beautiful attributes of God with which to imbue himself is his object. He need not suspend his respiration under Yoga Bihas to avoid distraction by breathing even. He is so engrossed in Divine Beauty that nothing would affect his concentration of mind. You will realize my meaning if you have fallen in true love. Does not the presence of your sweetheart in your imagination make you insensitive to all your environement ? If such concentration of mind is possible in a case of earthly love, think of it in matters Divine. Are we then in need of Yoga Bihas practices ? Contemplating on Divine attributes he studies his own shortcomings and his own undeveloped morals ; tries to find out means whereby he may divorce his earthly morals and make room for those Divine. Hard is the way and difficult is the path, but it is not impossible for a true seeker. His eyes are on that beautiful promise which has been conveyed to him through Muhammad.

The time, if he is perservering, at last comes when

he is at the threshold of realization. A flame descends from above and burns all carnal desires and bestial behests if any are still left unconsumed and ignites that Divine flame which is latent in every human being. His gold becomes purified of all dross, and he receives that Baptism of Fire of which the Baptist spoke. Do you not notice that a piece of iron when put in the fire assumes the form, colour, and attributes of fire—for the time being it loses itself and becomes fire itself. Do not these physical phenomena convince you of spiritual phenomena as well? Plunge into that Baptism of Fire of the love of God, and you will shine like God. At this time the blind will see at your hands, the dumb would speak, and the lame would walk, and dead bodies be brought to animation at your instance. Have you not read of such occurrences in sacred records? But unfortunately you take man of advanced spirituality for God or God-incarnate, and thus you shut the door of all progress against yourself. Take them as men like you, men they were, and men they are, and their high acquisitions will become a human possibility. Take one of them for example; compare such lucid moments of his life when he appears to you as God with those periods of his existence when he exhibits ordinary human infirmities. Count how many times he withered the fig-tree and how many times he forgot that that was not the season for fruit. And if the latter much exceed the former in degree and extent, he is not fire but a piece of iron in the fire. As long as it is in the fire he exudes light and heat, but when

those moments pass, it is the same old iron. These moments are not impossibilities. They do demand self-annihilation and true devotion. Certain beliefs and certain actions secure that happy Beautitude—Islam has made it accessible to all. It does not demand the life of a recluse or divorcement in man and his affairs. "Hand in action, with heart full of devotion," is wanted and Islam teaches you to create that state of mind.

SELF-EXPRESSION & COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

From A Muslim Standpoint with a few Observations on "New Thought"

Lecture by KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN, at Hastings, at the request of some "New Thought" Friends.

"SUCCESSFUL indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, and who keep aloof from what is vain, and who act aiming at purification, and who are continent, except before their mates or those whom their right hands possess, for they surely are not blamable, but whoever seeks to go beyond that, these are they that exceed the limits; and those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant, and those who keep a guard on their prayers; these are they who are the heirs, who shall inherit the Paradise; they shall abide therein."—The Qur-án.

These few verses from the chapter "Almomineen" of the Holy Qur-án contain two notable words in the original text. The one is "alfalah," which is commonly taken to mean success or the achievement of one's aims. The other is "waris," meaning heir, which signifies that those spoken of in the above verses will not only attain to success in this life, but will continue to exist with success in the life hereafter, for an heir is one who survives a certain state. The literal sense of the word "falah" is to unfold something in order to reveal its intrinsic properties.

This very word is used in Arabic for tilling as well, which is to break open the surface of the earth to make its dormant productive powers active. The English word plough seems to have been derived from this Arabic word "falah." It is one of the striking beauties of the Arabic language that its words in their primary sense denote the state which, when realized, conveys the import of the same. This is well illustrated in this very word "falah," which not only means success, but also significes what constitutes real success. Real success consists in working out all the capabilities of something to their perfection, i.e., the realization or unfoldment of the latent powers—self-expression. Thus the above Qur-ánic quotation not only assures us of perfect self-expression in this life, if we pursue the course it prescribes, but also vouchsafes the attainment of self-preservation both in this life and the hereafter. In fact, the two things, viz. self-expression and self-preservation, are at the root of all our struggle. Poets, painters and politicians consider their success to lie in their putting forth their thoughts, conceptions and policy before an appreciative public. The real source of all our activities and progress lies in these two incentives. Unfortunately quite a wrong interpretation of these, on some occasions, leads individuals as well as nations to their own ruin or the ruin of others. To them self-expression is no more than the expression of one's wish and will, which they must make to prevail over the will of others. The mistake lies in taking self-expression,

and that also in its wrong conception, as synonymous with, or as means of self-preservation. They ought in fact to have considered self-preservation only as a means to achieve the end—self expression, which in the Qur-ánic sense means development of our latent faculties. But quite the reverse of this, they regard self-preservation as the end, and self-expression, and that also in the wrong sense of the word, as a means to it. This perverse idea gave birth to a philosophy that wrought destruction in the world.

The definition is too clear to require any explanation. It aims at self-preservation at the expense of others. According to it, the secret of self-preservation lies in self-assertiveness, which has given birth to another wrong notion to the philosophy of struggle for existence and the survival of the strongest; according to which the weaker has got no right to live on the earth of God but to subserve to the ends of the stronger. How far this wrong interpretation can lead to the destruction of the world is best illustrated in the present war. It fosters a spirit of competition. Once captured with this idea, a man is capable of crushing every feeling of sympathy and good will in his anxiety to excel others. But Islam looks down with contempt at this sort of self-expression, which in reality is self-assertiveness.

Self-expression is the unfolding of the innate capacities and beauties that are embedded in the nature of man as a trust of God. It is through the expression of these that one can attain to spiritual height

resplendent wtth scintilla of Divine attributes. It is a matter of great satisfaction that Europe of our generation is after all growing cognizant of the true spirit of religion and emerging out of the convential forms of it. Man is hero-worshipper by instinct, and consequently he has looked upon bowing to some superstitions as observance of religious obligations. Likewise mere faith in this or that dogma has been regarded by some as the aim and end of religion. But this is a mistaken notion. Religion in sooth is the code of life, which when followed leads one to a consciousness of inner beauties and helps him to convert them into actualities. All our actions spring from our beliefs, which therefore constitute the root part of religion. Western people are, however, beginning to realize that religious perfection does not consist in the mere acceptance of a few dogmas of the Church. A feeling has now sprung up among some of them that they can also do what Jesus did. This reformed view of religion is, however, not an unmixed blessing. This class of people think that although human, they are capable of progressing right up to divine attributes as they believe Jesus did, and that this object is attained not so much by active exercise of one's powers but through inactive meditation and by leading a retired, undisturbed life. It is also asserted that so long as one does not divorce himself of mentality—that which alone distinguishes man from an animal, he cannot attain the highest degree of beatitude. These and such-like other ideas are only the

relics of by-gone beliefs which have not been shaken off entirely. Europe has for centuries been in the habit of paying homage to man-worship in some form or other. The North and West of the continent adored Woden and Thor, while the South and East lauded Jupiter, Zeus, Apollo, etc., as gods. They were only men, but presented to the credulous in fantastic garbs. All these divinities of the heathens in Europe afterwards gave way to another human god and made room for him, some fifteen centuries ago, who was humble enough to give his epiphany "in the manger and on the cross." But a new era has now dawned in these days. Jesus is looked upon not as God but as an elder brother, whose attributes we equally share and his divinity too. This belief is gradually fathering the thought that we can elevate ourselves as high as God, and can possess and dominate every atom of the universe as God can, and this all not through any active effort on our part but by silent and calm contemplation. This smells strongly of the refined pantheism of the ancient India, according to which man could divest himself of his humanity, if he so wished, and become divine. But does this view at all fit in with what we really are? Cannot the slightest change in the atmosphere cause our destruction? The circumstances with which we are surrounded make us absolutely dependent on the outside agencies for our well-being and existence. Let us take the very case of Jesus as a specimen from amongst those who from time to time have been taken to possess Divine attributes, and see

if this belief is borne out in his own words: "I cannot do anything myself" (St. John viii. 28); "Why callest thou me good?" "If I turn out the devil, it is by the help of the finger of God" (St. Luke xi. 20); "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew xxvii. 46).

Do these expressions signify any possible vindication of the aforesaid claim?

There are others in the West who believe that huge wealth would be theirs if they could only contemplate that they are surrounded on all sides with wealth which is really theirs, and that we could command, like God, all the sources of wealth to pour out their treasures at our feet, if we could by meditation attain to Divinity as Jesus did. But here is a refutation of the above in the words of this our elder Brother: "Foxes have places for hiding, and birds have nests for them in the air, but the son of man has no place to rest his head in." Then He says, on another occasion, "Of myself I can do nothing; of that hour and that day kneweth no man, neither the son." Those amongst us who are getting obsessed with the new-fangled idea that we can make ourselves great through mere meditation, would be well advised to study the 38th chapter of Job, in order to realize the limitation of human powers. No doubt that some of the sayings of these great personages, who are a manifestation of some Divine powers and in whom the spark of Divine attribute embedded in their nature has grown into a full blaze of fire, contain certain

words misleading to the common people. The notion that we can achieve equality to God seems to have arisen out of expressions like that of Jesus, who is reported to have said, "I am one with my Father." This expression no doubt signifies an obvious truth, but the interpretation put thereon is quite erroneous. A single detached sentence out of the speech of a person is not sufficient to grasp his meanings. It is desirable to have a wider survey of his sayings and to see that no such interpretation is put on some of his words as will clash with the sense or tenor of the rest of his speech. Had this been the criterion of determining the meanings of Jesus by his votaries, we are positive they would have been saved from cross and man-worship. The same person who says on one occasion that he is one with his father utters the following words in a critical state of distress "O my Father! if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, *not as I will but as Thou wilt*" (Matthew xxiii. 46). Can these be the words of one who is said to claim equality with God? The saying, however, is not valueless. It illustrates a great spiritual phenomenon which we frequently come across in the lives of the blessed amongst mankind. As a matter of fact, when a man completely subordinates his own will and desires to the will of God, all his actions and words partake of Divine attributes He becomes steeped in the colour of God, and this is the stage where he is one with God. It is this state that entitles Jesus to say: "I am one with my father." Others

have uttered similar words. "I am Bhagwan," i.e., god, comes from the lips of Krishna. Hands of Mohammad are declared to be those of God in the words of God—the Qur-án. Let us carefully study this other quotation of Jesus just cited—"Not as I will but as thou wilt," What a guarded statement! He lays no claim to equality with God, but expresses his union with Him through his submission to the Most High. He has killed his own volition and has lost his individuality into that of the Father. His actions and words are only to work out the will of the Other. Is it strange then to find him say "I and my Father are one," not on account of equality, but for reason of complete submission, and implicit subordination to the High Will? Self-surrender of Jesus has reached a stage where nothing comes between God and His devoted votary, may he be A or B. It is this truth that constitutes the essence of Islam, and to attain which a Muslim stands in prayer and other devotional practices prescribed in the Qur-án. I will dwell on this subject later on. It is quite absurd to claim equality with the Divine Being. or to suppose that Divine mind is no more than our own in its evolved stage; and that this state of perfection in man is reached only through silent contemplation with eyes closed and at the expense of our mentality.

This method of achievement too is in reality another relic of old dogmas in the West. In order to press her many doctrines for acceptance, the Church has ever emphasized the fact that reason is no criterion to

test the veracity of matters religious, which must command our blind allegiance. This phase of "New Thought" now prevailing in the West is but the same divorce of reason, though it differentiates itself from the conventionalities of the Church. Again we are told that for such achievements, the only thing needed is faith while actions, can be dispensed with. This idea they again inherit from the Church. Martin Luther, in spite of his bold departure from the established Christianity of his day, could not help falling into the same error and retained the principle of salvation through faith as the cardinal point of his creed. With him actions were nothing. Believe in the atonement and you get salvation, was his religion, and it is repeated to-day by the so-called freed school of New Thought, though in a new form. To get rid of your disease a kindred movement in the West—Christian Science—would advise you simply to close your eyes and imagine yourself enveloped in health all round with your various faculties working properly and your cheeks to be ruddy without resorting to any medical aid. They think their fancies will assume the form of realities, if they could firmly believe it to be so. I do not deny that imagination plays a considerable part in the build of physique, but I am not prepared to admit that it can bring about such effects as depend upon your dietetic faculties. You may control your appetite to a certain limit, but this will never give you strength such as you can gain by food alone.

There are some who are tempted to generalize

from witnessing a few cases where a patient had been brought to health in this way. But they ignore many other circumstances attending each particular case, amongst which individuality of the patient plays a great part. Every case must be scrutinized on its own merits. One has also to make sure how far the individual's recovery is due to certain mesmeric effects under the wholesome and healthy influence of the active agent. We demand a plain test to establish the efficacy of the above process. Do not take your food for a week, but only imagine that you have done so. If you could then preserve your strength, vitality, your rosy complexion and the brightness of your eyes, I will come to believe in your theory of contemplation. So far I admit that you may subdue your appetite by slow degrees till you cultivate in you a power to keep fast for a long time.

Man by nature, in his undeveloped stage, loves ease and shirks exertion. As, for instance, there was a quest for the philosopher's stone, in the medieval ages, whose touch with base metal was believed to transform it into sterling gold. In these days too, we do believe in such a stone to amass heaps of gold, but this is no other than our personal effort. To obtain gold without labour was a specimen of the ignorance of medieval ages. Likewise, in the realm of spirituality the doctrine of "faith without deed" has its sources in the same tendency to avoid effort. Belief in the "blood" came to take the place of the philosopher's stone in spiritualities which could conver

base human nature into highest morals in a single moment, although belief in this doctrine is practically non-existent to-day in many quarters in the West, but its place has been taken by one equally unintelligible and demoralizing. Contemplation is now believed to be the way to achieve all desires. To a limited extent, however, this new philosophy contains partial truth. Calm contemplation is no doubt a step in the right direction. It produces a certain kind of sensation to which the Western world was an utter stranger for so many centuries. This peculiar sensation is, however, the very first rung of the ladder, in the spiritual upliftment and not the top.

No one can deny that self-expression consists in the development of those powers in man, which distinguish him from lower animals. Conscious self forms the difference between the two. The development of mind depends upon contemplation, and the latter is only possible through silence and calm meditation. It is therefore indispensable to retire from the bustle of life to some secluded place and give ourselves up to meditation if we want to cultivate our various faculties of mind. But it is not a new revelation. For this very purpose the sages of old in the East, isolated themselves from human society. In order to attain self-expression they took up their abode in the inaccessible recesses of forest glades and mountain fastnesses. Certain manifestations of some of the spiritual powers were no doubt made by these people; but this course did never prove practicable for the real benefit of

human society. Buddha commands the spiritual homage of millions, yet very few of them could adopt his mode of life as a code of theirs.

Another strong argument against the aforesaid method lies in the very nature of man, who is sociable by instinct. The realization of many of his powers is closely bound up with others in relations of mutual interdependence. There are many other traits of human character which can come into play and flourish only in the midst of society. Courage, patience and benevolence are some of the highest virtues in man. There lies not the slightest chance for one to exercise these virtues if he has secluded himself from human society. Similarly perseverance and fortitude in the face of obstacles are extremely essential for the development of spirituality. All these grow through exercise, and when one is placed in adverse circumstances—a thing only attainable in social life. We prize so much the development of our will power. Can we get it in its different phases if in secluded life one is never chanced to face evil and temptation of various character. If no injustice is done in our presence or no one injured, how can we bring into play our sense of equity, justice and sympathy ? Only very few inner powers do not require society for their cultivation.

Corresponding to our external senses we have internal senses as well. Besides the apparent eye and ear, we are gifted with inner organs of sight and hearing which produce clairvoyance and clairaudience. We can sometimes read the feelings of others. But these

few powers do not constitute in themselves the height of spirit-force. They are some of the gifts of God to man. Islam has laid down an efficacious course to attain this stage and achieve many other kindered things. But Muslim divines never encouraged such acquisitions, as it is not the goal of life. Yet the curiosity-loving nature hankers after it. Such-like things are no doubt obtained through asceticism, but the method kills many noble traits of humanity. Sometimes they become a source of pain, as in the case of clairvoyance.

Real spiritual elevation as expounded by Islam, and the rules to achieve which are laid down in the Qur-án, consists in the state when human mind is clarified into a mirror to reflect Divine will, when every one of his organs works in accordance with the will of God, in short, when each movement of his, hearing, seeing, sitting, walking, etc., should completely harmonize with the will and wish of God. This is the spiritual height, at which man becomes the beloved of God, and it is to this stage that a tradition from the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessing be with him) refers in the following words: God sayeth, "O man! only follow thou My laws, and thou shalt become like unto Me. and then say 'Be' and behold "It is." God sayeth, "The person I hold as beloved, I am his hearing by which he heareth, and I am his sight by which he seeth, and I am his hand by which he holdeth, and I am his feet by which he walketh."

I have already referred to the first step towards

the attainment of these capabilities as consisting in silence and contemplation. I have also mentioned that there is a sort of pleasant sensation, which the West is beginning to perceive. But the error lies in regarding it as the be-all and end-all of spiritual evolution. The very course that is followed to attain this sweet sensation betrays that a wrong ideal has been set up. For instance, the method prescribed is first of all to concentrate one's attention on a fixed point to avoid one's thoughts getting scattered; for as a matter of fact, real meditation depends upon concentration of mind. As a typical practice we are directed to have our house closed with all its holes plugged, and hold our meditation in a quarter far removed from the din of life, and then compose a poem, solve a philosophic problem or draft, say, a piece of composition not containing words with a particular letter. We will thus secure ourselves against the disturbing effect of sense-organs. The object of the whole of this process is, so to say, the drugging of the organs of sense by force of concentration. We admit that by thus drugging the senses, the mind will begin to make a manifestation of some of its wonderful capacities. But if we could weaken and hush up our sense-organs by drugging them in some other way and obtain the same result, where on earth lies the difference between the two methods, viz. concentration of mind through such seclusion and the drugging of sense-organs? For instance, in the East, such a state of senses is created through hashish, a kind of herb, having an intoxicat-

ing effect different from that of fermented liquor or opium. Liquors produce a sort of buoyant emotion in the mind, while opium atrophies our senses, but hashish has a dulling effect upon the whole system, and concentrates the mind on anything towards which it may happen to be attracted. If one under the influence of hashish should close his eyes and imagine his soul to be soaring in the sky, he will really feel so. This is why the stuff is called in Persian falaksair, i.e. ramble in the sky. This I say, on the ground of personal experience of the effect of this drug when I took it for trial some thirty years back. I have also experienced the pleasant sensation arising out of the meditation in question, and am therefore in a position to compare the two, which are very much akin to each other. Both consist in a sort of an intoxicating effect, and both are the outcome of so much weakening the sense-organs as not to disturb mind activities. It is quite immaterial whether this drugging is the result of hashish or of any other method to avoid distraction of mind. The net result following thereon is nearly the same, viz. deadening of senses and a pleasant sensation. We would therefore invite the attention of our friends connected with such movements that they may have silent contemplations by all means, but the pleasure resulting therefrom is not self-expression. Self-expression demands a difficult course to be pursued, beset with manifold obstacles, and requiring great self-discipline. Over and above all the drawbacks of this new thought, there is another difficulty which makes

all our attempts to avoid disturbance of mind futile: We may retire from the bustle of life and shut ourselves up in a solitary closet. We may thus secure our sense-organs against all disturbing inflences. But how can we manage to quiet down the storm of all those conflicting ideas, impulses and passions that surge in our bosom? As human beings we are of the earth and bound to it by numerous ties. Our interests are sometimes in danger, while again certain boisterous passions swell our breast. Such-like circumstances are sure to undo all above-said efforts for the concentration of mind. To obviate this difficulty some persons or some religious systems would have us crush these passions, a remedy wrong in itself. These passions in their primary form are the very impulses which originate in the instinctive life-tendency in man.

As I said before, self-expression presupposes the feeling for self-preservation, which,in its turn, consists in the satisfaction of these same passions. Consequently, by killing our passions we deal death-blow to our very self, thus defeating our object of self-expression. Keeping all these considerations in view, Islam has struck upon a golden mean. We should have self-expression as the *summum bonum* of life and self-preservation as a means towards it. In other words, the feeling of self-preservation must be there, but only in so far as it should promote the purpose of self-expression. Before I attempt to show what method of silence and contemplation which I recognize as the first step towards the attainment of

spiritual perfection as Islam prescribed, I would invite the reader's attention to another point.

Sense of self-preservation germinates from self-consciousness. Animal consciousness is a bundle of only a few blind impulses, devoid of the consciousness of individuality. For instance, the impulse of hunger, when aroused, demands gratification, without any consciousness, on the part of the animal, of the fact that it is instrumental to self-preservation. Man, on the other hand, knows not only that these impulses are the springs of his various activities, but also, that he owes his very life to the satisfaction thereof. This creates self-consciousness. This individual consciousness is responsible for the sense of personal rights in man and the question of mine and thine. This is also found sometimes in lower animals, but to a very limited extent and receives its full development only in man. Individual consciousness, if not properly regulated, makes us encroach upon the rights of others, for the sake of self-preservation. It is to put a check on the irregularities of this consciousness that several laws have been framed. As a matter of fact, man's utility to society and the development of his own mind both depend upon his evolution from this stage to the moral one. His interests must not be confined to his own mind, both depend upon his evolution from this stage to the moral one, His interests must not be confined to his own person, but should extend to other members of the society. So long as his outlook is limited to his own personal interests, he has not risen above

the life of flesh. He breathes in a higher atmosphere and steps in the sphere of a moral life when he links up his interests with those of the society, leaving behind his selfish, sordid desires. This moral state partakes of spiritual lustre, when he outgrows the stage at which he respects the interests of others with a view to further his own, and is prepared to sacrifice his own interests for those of others, or in other words when his invidual consciousness gives way to race consciousness. By race I do not mean any particular nationality one belongs to, but the whole human race. But, unfortunately, there is another obstacle on the way which hinders his progress. Instead of widening the sphere of his interests to the whole of humanity, his views become narrow and cramped by delimitating the scope of his social usefulness with the ideals of nationality, *i.e.*, his self consciousness is transformed into national consciousness. Even then he is self-sacrificing for others, but the field of this sacrifice covers only the particular community or nation to which he belongs. This germinates that ignoble feature of patriotism which is responsible for social prejudices and national rivalries. It gives birth to wars when nations rise against nations and cause human devastation. In individuals, the impulse of self-centred selfishness tends to produce law-breakers and usurpers of the legitimate rights of others, but the activity of this impulse in communities and nations is responsible for wars. The root cause of all such crimes in individuals or nations would always be found in their false worship

of this impulse of self-consciousness. A study of human history reveals the fact that wars are waged because particular nations want either to protect their interests against others or sacrifice those of other nations to theirs. The word patriotism does, no doubt, sound very sweet, but then it has been the cause of shedding human blood in the past as well as the present. Those who have not progressed beyond the stage of individual or national consciousness to that of human race consciousness, are yet far removed from the spiritual realm. Just as the moral stage is not reached so long as a man moves in the sphere of individual consciousness. similarly the spiritual window is not opened to one whose attention is yet confined to national consciousness. True spiritual state is the concomitant of human race consciousness. There is a still higher stage beyond this state of consciousness. It is only attained when one sacrifices his personal interests for the sake, not of the community of which he is a member, nor even of the race to which he belongs, but of the whole of the universe. When all impulses of self-aggrandizement at the expense of anything in the universe, are dead, then he has truly succeeded in scaling the loftiest pinnacle of spiritual grandeur and glory. His interests are then identified with those of every atom in nature. This is the stage of cosmic consciousness point of human self-expression and the final stage of preparation for his true self-expression. Here his spirituality becomes full fledged. His physical nature has become subsided and has partaken of

Divine Nature. He has entered into the holy precincts and a sort of union is created between him and his god. It was in such a state of spirituality that Jesus exclaimed: "I am one with my Father."

How mistaken is one's assertion when he says that God's interests centre in him alone. Rather, every atom in the whole of the universe is the object of His interest. Let no one, therefore, claim that his mind is the mind of God, unless he has moulded his entire self, his thoughts as well as actions, in consonance with the will and wish of the Lord and Evolver of the worlds. This is the ultimate stage of cosmic-consciousness, and it is attained when one's movements, one's eating and drinking, one's prayer and fasting and other religious rites are in thorough submission to the will of God. Here it was that the Holy Prophet, Mohammad (may peace and blessings be on him), proclaimed: "Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord, the Maintainer, the Nourisher, and Evolver of the whole universe, Who has no peer, and this am I commanded . . . and I am the foremost of these who are submissive (to Him)."

This is the picture of one who is the superman of the Qur-án. Let us compare this superman to that of Neitzsche. Both share a desire to live—an instinct of self-preservation. But one links up his self-preservation with this world, and so with him self-expression consists in self assertiveness; while the other regards his self-expression as dependent on the evolution of

those powers, which partake of Divine glory on a human scale, and which consists in serving the whole universe at his own discount.

I have already pointed out that silent contemplation can never remain undisturbed, so long as passions are not subdued in man's mind, and also that any attempt to crush these passions is tantamount to suicide, as self-expression is possible only through self-preservation, which again depends for its existence on the same passions. Consequently, the peace of mind and concentration of thoughts cannot be attained simply by retiring to solitude, but it comes within human reach through a mastery over passions. But this control of low desires is only possible when individual consciousness, passing through various stages, say, family, national and racial consciousness, is sublimated into cosmic-consciousness. Real contemplation and the good thereof is only the lot of one, possessed of cosmic-consciousness. It is meet therefore that instead of detaching ourselves from the world and attempting to subside sense-disturbances through certain mind-exercises, we should try to feel the presence of God in loneliness and by reflecting on His attribute as the Maintainer, Nourisher, and Evolver of all the worlds, we should cultivate a sense that His interest embraces the whole universe and not of our own self, and we have to follow His ways in our dealing with the universe. Such contemplation will enable us to enter into the spiritual realm. This is the right path, along which we can walk in the footsteps of God-

This is the truth, which Islam came to teach and realize. To achieve this object, no other course is more efficacious than that prescribed by Islam. And here I give the A, B, C of the course. It enjoins upon its followers to rise very early and, after proper ablutions, to stand in a most submissive attitude, in the presence of God. Thus a Muslim stands in the stillness of early dawn, generally in a place free from the din of life, and meditates upon those attributes of his Maker which are given at the very outset of the Qur-án—*Alhamdu lillah-i-Rabbil-'alamin, etc.* All praise and glory is for Allah, the Creator, Nourisher, and Maintainer, and Evolver of the whole universe, Whose beneficence gives us things we have need of and without our meriting them; Whose mercy gives us hundredfold reward for one action; and Who is Lord of the day of requital. This is the beginning of the Muslim prayer. The object of this recitation is not to glorify God and cite His praises. With Islam, Divine glorification consists in human edification. God, as the Qur-án says, is above needing our praises. By reciting these attributes of God in our prayers we are led to think how far we are in tune with Him. We are enjoined by the Prophet to imbue ourselves with Divine attributes, and the recitation comes to enlighten us in this respect. It is through such meditation that individual consciousness receives sublimation into cosmic consciousness, the Evolver of the worlds. I would not at present dilate upon the various expressions in a Muslim's prayer, each and every one of which absorbs

him in meditation. After the morning prayer the Muslim goes about his business with a strengthened heart, to face all that would call into play his various powers. After noon he would once more repair to the Holy Presence, and calmly meditate on the same attributes of God. Thus retiring into solitude every second or third hour, five times a day, his contemplations help him to cultivate a sense of cosmic consciousness. If, in the intervals, he finds any transgression on his part, repeated prayers to the Almightly are constant reminders to him of the real aim—the cosmic consciousness. The Islamic prayer is, so to say, a running stream of pure water of cosmic consciousness, in which the Muslim's heart takes his dip five times a day. Is it possible for one thus trained, to be narrow-minded, selfish or over-bearing to an extent which would lead to crimes, private or national? The Holy Prophet, Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be upon him!), is reported to have remarked to his companions:—

"If you have a stream flowing by your house wherein you may take a bath five times a day, is it possible that your bodies should remain unclean?" The reply was a dicided no. "The Stream," added the Holy Prophet, "is your prayer five times a day." We Muslims say our prayers in congregation, but each time there are some portions which we perform by ourselves. I admit that prayer with many is a mechanical thing and therefore inefficacious, but abuse of a thing is not the defect of the institution. There is yet another prayer which is said all alone, at the dead of

night, in order to have perfect concentration, in the said meditation.

Let us revert to the verses from the Holy Qur-án, which I gave in the prelude. It is said therein that only those would be able to develop their powers or achieve self-expression, who pray to God in a spirit of thorough submissiveness and fear. This is followed by a recapitulation of those duties which one owes to his fellow beings. The object of this is to remind us that self-expression, which is only obtainable through keeping up of cosmic consciousness, depends upon the fulfilment of our obligations to others. The spark of this sense is kept alive by giving it a practical garb in the discharge of these duties. In the first place, attempt has been made to cultivate in us a sense and then practical exercises have been set to maintain it. The last verse holds out a promise of obtaining possession of "Firdaus," i.e., paradise, which amounts to a perfect stage of self-expression. The word *Firdaus* literally means full fructification of seeds into garden. The course prescribed to attain cosmic consciousness is that we should jealously guard our prayers by acting up to the words cited, in the comport of life in all its activities, otherwise our prayer is a farce. The perfection is reached when we constantly move under the sense of cosmic consciousness thus reminded in prayer. It should be the background of all our movements. As a student of religion, I have been struck with this feature of Islam, that where other sages conceived this truth in a very complicated manner, and with great

difficulty made it visible to the layman, Islam has not only brought it within reach of common understanding but has also given it practical shape. To cultivate this feeling of cosmic consciousness, people retired into solitary woods. The banks of the sacred Indian rivers were resorted to for this very purpose. But Islam has elevated its follower to this pinnacle of spiritual glory, in a practical way, by keeping him in the world, making him fulfil the obligations he owes to his fellow-beings, and putting him in the services of the teeming creation of Allah, at the same time reminding him of his real goal and the most efficacious way to achieve it.

PHYSICALITY, MORALITY, SPIRITUALITY.

IT will not be out of place to say here a few words about Spirituality—a subject so much talked of and so little understood, but which can be attained only by cultivation of Cosmic Consciousness. It is rightly made so much of and set up as the *summum bonum* of human life. From the pulpit and the platform we listen with rapt attention to sermons after sermons impressing the importance of cultivating "spirituality." Works on ethical lore are replete with the same idea. A very sweet and charming expression indeed! But the question might be asked in what on earth does the fascination of the world consist? Unfortunately, however, the true import of the world has not been generally realised and many attempts in this direction amount to little more than groping in the dark. All the sacred books, excepting the Qur-án, are silent or vague on the point. Neither do they prescribe any definite course for the realization thereof. The Holy Qur-án, on the other hand, does not only set forth in terms unequivocal in what "spirituality" consists, but also supplies the best of guidance to attain to the same.

Before attempting to give the Islamic conception

of the term, its beauty, simplicity and accuracy, we would invite the reader's attention to the popular notion concerning the relation of soul and body, which has contributed a good deal to the confusion of the true sense. Soul and body are supposed to be two independent entities, absolutely separate from each other till the latter was formed and the former entered therein. This naturally gave rise to the idea that the function of the material part of man, i.e. body, is "physicality" and that of the soul quite unconnected with the physical nature, is "spirituality", as though there were two watertight compartments in the same mind. Spirituality is thus said to be attainable only when its rival, physicality, has been totally crushed. Annihilation of the one, so to say, leads to the birth of the other. Kill your natural cravings and passions, and adopt a monkish or nunnish sort of ascetic life, and then alone you will be able to attain to the pinnacle of spiritual glory. What an unnatural and unreasonable view! How can we set to nought things innate in our nature and gifts of God to us? It is their abuse which renders them undesirable, but they give rise to real virtues when brought under proper control.

As a matter of fact human mind is one single whole, not partitioned into two separate component parts, always daggers drawn with each other. Soul is not an alien element ushered into matter at a certain stage of development. On the contrary, it is an inseparable concomitant of matter in all its forms from the crude electronic condition to the perfect stage in man.

According to the Islamic conception, soul is the child of body, i. e. a product out of matter. Even in the very ethereal stage of matter, which under numerous processes of specialization ultimately develops to the stage of man, there exists in embryonic state what is called soul, which attains a high form of prefection in man. This is a subject which will receive a separate dealing in these pages.

In fact, "physicality" and "spirituality" are not two separate things at variance with each other and never admitting of reconciliation. An analysis of the middle stage between the two, the connecting link, i.e. morality, reveals the fact that they are different forms and conditions of the same thing, and that physicality is an indispensable ground for the development of spirituality. Certain phases of what is known as morality are but the refined forms of physical nature, while some others constitute what is known as spirituality. Hence the latter is nothing but the most refined growth out of "physicality." To illustrate this, let us consider the fact that all our activities have certain cravings at their bottom, which give rise to the question of "mine and thine." These cravings are shared by animals and men alike, but which when roused in the former seek gratification with the very first object met with, regardless of the consideration to whom it belongs. Even in the human race there are yet certain people who verge on animality in this respect. They make use of the first object of satisfaction they happen to come across. This is the animal state of

our cravings. When individual consciousness which gives rise to the sense of " mine " and " thine " grows in man, he steps up to the moral plane, for morality consists in respecting the rights of others. The only difference between the two stages lies in the fact that in the animal state the cravings are too blind to have any regard for " mine " and " thine," while morality, enlightened by individual consciousness, draws a line of distinction between the two. The mere thought of encroaching upon the rights of others is shocking to a moral man.

But this moral stage must not be confused with and mistaken for the spiritual one, as is not infrequently done. Spirituality is, no doubt, morality on a high scale, but far above and quite distinct from it. Morality is content with putting a restraint upon the natural cravings, not to violate the rights of others in seeking satisfaction, but no more. Spirituality, however, aims at something still higher and nobler. It prompts one to sacrifice his personal interests for the good of others. This is the dawn of spiritual light in the moral sphere, till a stage is reached when he devotes the whole of his life and d all his activities to the welfare of his fellow-beings, and the universe at large. This is a plane of spirituality at which a man takes the whole creation of the Lord in the purview of his interest, in other words his own good with that of the universe. It is at this pinnacle of spiritual glory that he exclaims with a Persian poet :—

Az'an Qafas biparidam biroon ke dunya nam ;
Kunoon ba Kingrai-arsh ja-i-ma bashad.

(Out have I flown of the cage known as the world; the top of the Heavenly Throne is now my resting place.)

The beneficent Creator of the world then showers His blessings upon him, inasmuch as he has made his own self-subservient to the interests of His creation. He becomes one with the Lord and is granted the privilege of holding communion with Him, for a sort of affinity grows up between the servant and the Master in consequence of their community of interest, i e.. looking after the welfare of the creation. It is to this state that the Qur-ánic words Arrahmán-u-államal Qur-án (Arrahman has taught the Qur-án) point. When steeped in the attribute Rahmanyyat (the quality that makes provision for the sustenance of life gratis) of " Allah," he becomes a fit recipient of Divine revelation.

To recapitulate the whole, man is in the physical (animal) nature, when he is given to the blind satisfaction of his cravings, no matter at whosoever's expense. Moral element crops up in him when he comes to discriminate between " mine" and " thine," and respect the rights of others But he soars high into regions spiritual when he acquires the habit of sacrificing, with a smiling face, all the means of satisfying the promptings of his own nature for the welfare of the hosts of His creation. Spirituality then does not consist in the crushing of our animal nature, nor is it

tantamount to the sum total of a few tender moralities, as commonly supposed. It lies in the regulation of the one and the sublimation of the other—the proper balancing of our passions and surrendering ourselves to the service of His teeming millions. To put it in a nutshell, one is in the depth of animality when everything is "mine" to him; he ascends to the moral plane when to him "mine" is "mine" and "thine" is "thine"; but he soars high up in the sphere of spirituality when nothing is "mine" and everything "thine."

How beautifully has the Holy Qur-án delineated these three stages of human nature in the following eloquent words:—

1. "Nafsi Ammara" (the soul wont to command), which prompts to anything fair or foul to gratify certain cravings. This is the animal or physical stage.

2. "Nafsi Lawwama" (the self-accusing soul), which puts a check on low propensities to transgress the limits of right. This is the moral stage.

3. "Nafsi Mutmaimia" (the soul at rest), which makes one lose himself in the service of the universe at large. Absorbed heart and soul in the good of the world, one is lifted high up to Celestial regions beyond the reach of the clouds of terrestrial cares and sorrows, where there is always sunshine and bliss. This is the height of spiritual glory, of which the Holy Qur-án speaks in the following terms:—

"O soul's that are at rest! Return to your Lord well-pleased with Him, well-pleasing Him.

"Join my servants and enter my paradise."

As to the various ways and means prescribed by Islam to attain to such a stage of spiritual glory, we propose discussing them under a separate head.

ELIXIR OF LIFE

(In Theosophical Hall, Folkstone, England.)

"To merge in God" and to be "at one with Him" is the first and last desire in an average man—a noble human craving evinced from time immemorial, in different garbs of phraseology suiting different "times and climes." Religion creates and feeds this Divine passion in us. Man, it is said, has been made after the image of God. He possesses Divine element in him. His chief aim is to develop it, but he is hampered in this pursuit. He has other cravings in him. His nature represents the physical and mental sides. His sentimentality goes a long way to mould his character; an accumulation of conflicting elements, and yet it is only in their harmony that great results are to be attained. And who can deny this truth? The whole universe bears witness to it. Do not things of conflicting properties, when combined in proper proportion, create most desirable results; and why not in the evolution of humanity? But man without Divine help has often evinced his incapacity to solve this difficult problem of human evolution. He has often cultivated one side of his nature and ignored the other. If the world has never been without its followers of Epicurus,it has always counted generations of ascetics

of the most austere rigidity in every nation and age. If luxury at the table carries carnal desires to extremes and kills spirituality, so asceticism, though favourable to spirituality in a way, causes mental imbecility and sentimental decrepitude. Under it certain latent faculties, no doubt, come to work ; sometimes an ascetic works seeming wonders, but the real object is lost. He becomes a burden on society. We are sociable by nature ; we have been given various faculties ; we have to help each other and use those faculties for the good of humanity ; but a monk is dead to all these noble sentiments, Nay, he sometimes shows moral weakness of the blackest dye. Not being in touch with common-day human society, he has not received the proper moral culture. He knows not how to observe his civic duties, and sometimes proves a moral delinquent. An average man is struck by his possession of power to work certain wonders, which he uses to his best advantage with a graceful show of piety, and the former takes him for a great divine. I have seen marvellous thought-readers and hypnotic healers in India. I have seen men working wonders, but at the same time manifesting a disgraceful character. This apparent anomaly admits of easy explanation. We have been equipped with wonderful latent faculties. If we cultivate some and neglect the others, we may excel others in some respects. If a best musician is a moral wreck sometimes, why not an ascetic with no knowledge of sacred and social relations, a blackguard with all his power of seeing unseen things? Asceticism within

legitimate bounds is essential for spiritual growth. There can be no spirituality without control of the physical nature. But you cannot curb the latter; you do so for a time and then become a helpless victim to it when once aroused. It would be to find fault with the wisdom of Divine Providence if we pursue a course that kills passions in our nature.

Carnal Passions Subservient to Spirituality

In fact, all our lower passions and carnal desires are subservient to our spirituality, but they are indispensable. Any human institution, call it religion or otherwise, which helps only partial growth of our nature and ignores many other faculties, cannot claim perfection. We admit that God alone is and ought to be our final goal; but, on the other hand, He alone is responsible for equipping us with such versatile nature. How to evolve it is a great human problem. Our salvation, according to Islamic teaching, means our evolution. But how belief in a certain event in history, or faith in a certain dogma, can develop and control our various passions and morals is a great mystery to me. In all human affairs we believe in rules and regulations. But in religion, which only means a way to salvation, we are forced to certain beliefs, and our acceptance of them, it is said, guarantees our reaching the goal. An unpardonable absurdity on its very face! A hopeless failure in Europe for the last 2,000 years.

To reach God is to evolve that Divine element in us which is hidden in various coverings of human passions and morals, physical as well as spiritual. How to harmonize these jarring elements, how to train and balance them ? How to bring them to moderation, so that they may all be subservient to the achievement of one great end, viz., evolution of the Divine element, when the human soul becomes full-fledged, and man becomes imbued with attributes of God ? It is to accomplish this great end that the mystic side of Islam comes into play.

Mysticism in Europe

Mysticism in Islam should not be confused with what is understood by it in certain quarters here. When an average theologian fails to grasp the real meaning of some Bible text, or is unable to understand or explain some narrative in the Scripture on rational basis, his ingenuity comes to his help ; he at once jumps to some forced explanation, and with full complacency of mind names this strange feat of his as mystical interpretation of the Scriptures. The miracles of the Lord of Christianity receive an allegorical explanation, and the high-sounding title of mystical meaning is given to cover this threadbare method of reading the Bible. "Nothing shall be impossible unto you," said Jesus, when speaking about working wonders. "Howbeit," he continued, "this kind goeth not but by prayer and fasting." What this fasting and prayer mean we are still to be enlightened upon by these mystics.

It has already been explained that the Divine element which demands evolution to make man a perfect image of God has been clothed in various human passions and desires, and unless death comes first over all of them, this high stage cannot be attained. The day on which death comes over our earthly life is the day of the triumph of spirituality and the day of the revelation of the Divine Being. We are blind as long as we are not blind to all other sights, and we are lifeless as long as we are not lifeless under the hand of God. "Die before you die," says the Prophet of Islam. This stage is not attained unless all the members of our body and all the faculties which sustain us are made to work in total submission to God; our life and death have no other object but in the pleasure of God. When a Muslim mystic has thus submitted his will and intention to the will of God, the intention of God becomes his intention, and he has no delight but in obedience to Him. "Thy will and not mine" is his watchword. This is what Islam literally means. Islam is that burning fire which burns all low desires, and, setting fire to all false gods, offers our life, property, and honour as a sacrifice before God. Entering into this fountain we drink the water of a new life.

"A fire resembling that of lightning flashes out of us and a fire descends from above. These two flames coming into contact with each other consume all low motives and carnal desires and the love of others than God. A sort of death comes over the first

life," and we become regenerated. This stage has been termed by Muslim mystics the meeting of God, for it is then that a man sees the face of God. His connection with God is so strong that he, as it were, sees God with his eyes. He is granted strength from above, the internal faculties are all brightened, and the magnetism of a pure, heavenly life works strongly. Upon reaching this stage, "God becomes his eyes with which he sees, his hand with which he attacks, his ears with which he hears, and his feet with which he walks "*

Man becomes a perfect image of God. It is this stage of human perfection when Lazarus is raised from the dead and Naaman is cured of leprosy by man, when an exceeding great army can be raised in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, when dead are raised to life and hundreds of the companions in the Arabian desert get their thirst and other needs satisfied with one small water-skin.

What has been said above to attain this *par excellence* state of humanity may be epitomized in the following words of the holy Prophet of Arabia :—

"God saith, 'O man, only follow thou My laws, and thou shalt become like unto Me; and then say, 'Be,' and behold 'It is.'"

"Follow thou My laws, and thou shalt become like unto Me," explains the process as well as the object of Mysticism. It is not in killing our various passions, desires, and faculties which hamper our pro-

* From the Sayings of the Holy Prophet Mohammad.

gress, but in bringing them into subjection to the will of God that will help us to reach our goal. We pass through a course of discipline. We need laws and regulations to conduct all our faculties, and hence the laws governing our physical, moral and spiritual conditions. The physical conditions of man are closely connected with his moral and spiritual state. So much so that even his movements in eating and drinking play a part in the moulding of his moral and spiritual qualities. If, therefore, his natural desires are subjected to the direction of the law, they take the form of moral qualities, and deeply affect the spiritual state of the soul. Hence a Muslim mystic, under the teaching of the Qur-án, lays special stress upon external purity and cleanliness in all forms of devotion and prayer, and in all the injunctions relating to internal purity and moral rectitude. In short, as the evolution of the soul wholly depends upon the subjection of all our faculties to the final end, so all our passions and desires need a governing code. Drinks, eatables, and external cleanliness are alike to be provided; our relation to others in our various walks of life are to be looked after; our morals are to be controlled.

If self-renunciation to God's will as preached by Jesus from the Cross is the only way through which one has to pass before he reaches his divine goal, every human faculty and desire must have its own way of immolation, and unless I know the will of God concerning my particular passion or desire, how can I immolate it to His high will? "Thy will and not

mine" can only be fit in the mouth of one who knows the will of God as affecting every endeavour and walk of his life. Hence we need a Divine code to perfect our mystic course.

THE PERFECT IMAGE OF GOD.

Adam was made after the image of God as the Prophet said. Man has been equipped with wonderful capabilities. So says the Qur-án. They make their manifestation in some, but remain latent in many. But every one of us is His image, and must possess the attributes of God within the four walls of humanity. The door is not sealed against any. The holy founder of Islam gives the features of such an image in the following words:—

"God said: 'The person I hold as a beloved, I am his hearing by which he heareth, and I am his sight by which he seeth, and I am his hands by which he holdeth, and I am his feet by which he walketh.'"

How to reach this high state, the holy Prophet again says:—

"God saith: 'O man, only follow thou My laws, and thou shalt become like unto Me; and then say 'Be,' and behold 'It is.'"

"Follow thou My laws" will enable you to possess all the "limbs and joints of God." You say "Be," and it will exist. There is nothing supernatural in it. If a person is in tune with the Universe and in complete harmony with the laws of Nature, then his will is in accord with the Divine will, and whatever such a

person willeth cometh to pass. "Follow My laws" is the only key to this heavenly treasure, possession of which makes man a true image of God. The path is hard to tread on, but it is not an impossibility. If we are made after His image, His Divine features may be reflected through us. This high state of spirituality was more or less attained by all the faithful servants of God—Mohammad, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, and others, and is and shall remain ever open to all who "shall do and teach" the laws. Jesus, when in such beatitude, could say to others, "I am from the Father:" "One who believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Lord Krishna went further, and said: "I am Bhagwan" (God). Those who serve Him, he says, in any way, they shall have their full reward. He had come to accept sacrifices of man, not as priest, but as "God." Mohammad cast a handful of gravelstones and sand into the eyes of 1,000 Meccans who had come to destroy his life and that of his followers, and it caused confusion in the ranks of the enemy, to their utter defeat. And God says in the Qur-án in this connection:—

> "Thou didst not cast when thou didst cast, but God cast." Mohammad's hand was the hand of God on that occasion.

There is another verse in the Qur-án which explains this in a more laconic way:—

> "Say, O Prophet, to men, if they wish to be held as beloved of God, they can be so if they follow thee."

And one who is held as a beloved of God, his limbs are "limbs of God." One who follows Mohammad can become a perfect image of God, because Mohammad follows completely all the laws of God. Thus to follow the laws of God is to reach this high goal of humanity.

We cannot understand those psychological moments in human minds which enable men in the West to accept certain words of one man as proof of his divinity, and reject similar words in the case of the other. Words similar to, and sometimes more forcible than, the words of Jesus have escaped the blessed lips of others. Why one is accredited with Godhead by them and others not, is a mystery. No miracle was ever performed by Jesus which was not done by other prophets, and still one is supposed to be God and others men.

BAPTISM WITH WATER AND FIRE, EXPLAINED.

ISLAM - THE BAPTISM OF GOD.

I, indeed, baptise you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.—ST. MATT III. ii.

Baptism with water is a legacy from Judaism to Christianity. It could outlive that fatal influence of Pauline teachings, which relieved the adherents of the Church of Christianity from the burden of the Commandments. But if the law was the curse, as we infer from the writings of St. Paul, and its observance unnecessary is not the adoption and continuance of the Jewish rite of initiation to righteousness in the Church of Christ an anomaly? And if the sacred custom is observed to symbolise the new dispensation, the said ceremony, in fulfilment of the words quoted above, if they applied to Jesus Christ, should be performed with fire and not with water. We need not at present enter here into the question of the Holy Ghost—a Being imperceptible in Himself and often not recognisable when translated into the action and deeds of those baptised in the Church: a question which demands a

strange kind of orthodoxy of the faith to believe in Him.

BAPTISM IN THE CHURCH NOT WITH THE HOLY GHOST.

Besides, the symbol of the Holy Ghost is fire and not water, as the words of the Holy baptist show, and so it made Its appearance in "cloven tongue light as of fire." But the subsequent absolute disappearance of such experience in the Church as we read in the second chapter of the Acts, accompanied with the fact that Jesus and his Church never made use of fire when initiating people into His kingdom, leads one to believe that the baptist did not allude to the Son of Mary but to some one else for the full application of the words in the above quotation. The words, however, were true. They had their own meanings. In order to divine their spirit we should not forget the low intellectual growth of the people they were addressed to. Their national faculty was in its infancy. For lack of proper understanding in His disciples, Jesus had also to speak in parables. Great teachers of religion in other parts of the world in those days experienced the same difficulty. Similes and metaphors were the Chief means of imparting religious truths to the uninitiated. It could not be taught to them in the abstract.

SYMBOLISM SUITS CHILD HUMANITY.

Symbolism worked well. As dolls are necessary to amuse children, so idols and other symbols were placed before child man, as Lord Krishna says, to

bring him to his God. But ours is an age of advancement, and symbolism should give place to realities. Disregard of this fact only has caused all the difficulties in approaching religion on its purity. Men otherwise intellectually advanced show a want of common sense in matters of religion. They forget their time in accepting symbols for reality and figures of speech for facts. So is the case with Baptism. This ceremony among the jews was performed on reaching a certain age. Till then strict observance of the law was not demanded. Minority of age was taken as responsible for all defaults. But after Baptism fulfilment of all righteousness was expected. We use water in cleansing things from all impurities. We wash ourselves to remove all physical uncleanliness from our body. So a jew was plungedinto a tank or a river at his baptism to signify that he will purge himself of his past impurities, moral and spiritual, and prepare for a new life. The rite, as well as the idea of the new life, which came to Christianity through jewish channels was not peculiar to judaism. The Hindus and the Zoroastrians do the same thing till now. The hair of a Hindu child at the ceremony of of *Mundean* is cut and he is bathed in a river. Then comes the ceremony of the investiture of the sacred thread - a symbol of the new life - as wearing of the Cross with Christians of certain persuasions.

Symbolism, as stated above, works well with races intellectually less advanced. But it is not free from its drawbacks. Signs, when taken for realities

lead to wrong beliefs and false doctrines. Baptism could not stand above this general rule. Baptism in the name of Christ, it is alleged, causes a miraculous transformation in one's life. It infuses a new spirit and secures righteousness. With some sects of Christians, plunging in water in the name of Christ makes one sinless; so much so that the baptised stands no more in need of the observance of the law. Some are so sanguine of its efficacy that the subsequent delinquencies of one who has once been baptised in the name of Christ cannot mar its effects. Once baptised and you are saved. The time for such belief, however, has passed, though the missionary uses the same teaching in the East. He excites terror, and suggests baptismal water as the only agency to extinguish the fire of hell; hence his success with only the most ignorant. Symbols are, after all symbols; they bring no light or culture. They act when our mind works under superstition and is in its infancy. With the growth of culture and knowledge, they should give way to the great verities of life.

Islam, the final development of the religion of God, appeared when the age of reason and general intellectual culture was near its dawn. It therefore taught religion on rational basis; it divested it of all ritual coverings, and showed its face in its true colour; realities were manifested out of symbols and signs and a flood of light was thrown on the mysteries of Divine teachings. *Sabagh* is the arabic equivalent for the word *Baptism*. It literally means to dip a thing into

a dye. "Baptism, or the colour of God, is Islam," so says our Holy Book. When we dip a thing into a dye, it loses its original colour and assumes a new one. The object of Baptism is the same; to be at one with God, and to walk humbly with Him. We cannot attain this spiritual state unless we lose our very existence into that of God, which means to lose our own colour and adopt that of God. John the Baptist meant the same thing when he referred to the baptism with fire. When a thing is put into fire it apparently loses its own entity, and assumes the colours and attributes of fire. Divine baptism is to plunge into that fire, to consume our own entity and to be like a dead person in the hand of God, with no personal will, nor exercise of our own discretion, but absolute submission to His Will and implicit obedience to His Commandment. This is the literal meaning of Islam. Hence the words of the Quran, which say: "Islam is the Baptism of God." Thus we find in Islam the true interpretation of the words of John the Baptist.

Baptism with Water unto Repentance.

The Baptist spoke simple truth when he said: "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance." If you wish to get a proper dye on a cloth, you cannot do so unless your cloth is perfectly clean of all spots. If not, you have to wash it with water before dipping it into dye. So says John: You have to wash your unclean spiritual linen with the water of repentance before you plunge into the *fire* or the *dye* of God.

The baptismal ceremony in the Church may be taken as a verity in its symbolical form, but it is with water and hence a preparation ; we have still to walk humbly with God, to lose our own self, and to be at one with God—i.e., to be dyed in the dye of God. The questions then arise : How to do it ? Where is that fire of God which may burn ourselves and give us its own shape and attributes ?

In order to answer these questions we should first try to find the elements of our "self." What constitutes chiefly our entity ? It is our will, our discretion. and our judgment. This gives us our independent entity. This only differentiates us from the rest of the universe. When we subordinate our will to that of the other, morally speaking, we lose our existence. Is it not more difficult to plunge into burning fire than to yield to the opinions of others ? To baptise yourself with fire, therefore, is to immolate your will before the will of God ; and this means Islam. Hence the Quaranic text : Islam is the *Baptism of God. Baptism with water is a preparation for baptism* with fire. If the ceremony performed at the birth of a child, combined with the rite of Confirmation at the age of discretion, creates in him true subordination to the will of God, the pouring of water or plunging into the font in the church in the name of Christ is really a baptism with fire. But this is not one's experience. In spite of all baptismal functions true Christian life has become rare.

We all are, more or less, self-willed. Our will

requires training and discipline. Besides, unless we have the revealed will of God before us, we have nothing to be subordinate to. In every hour of life we have to use our will. Unless there are two courses before us, one dictated by our own will, and the other prescribed by God, there is no occasion for us to subordinate our will to that of God. How short-sighted was St. Paul who dispensed with the observance of the law; in it lay the whole discipline—the only course which could bring us to the altar of God for self-immolation, and to plunge into the Divine fire.

DECISION BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM.

The whole problem resolves itself into one question: Does baptism in the name of Christ and our belief in the cross miraculously transform us into at-one-ment with God: does it paralise all our bestial passions and desires and make us but as automatons in the hand of God? If so, we are really baptised with fire. But if to reach that high state of Resignation to God we require a course of discipline, a training under which we have to learn how to win the victory of God in the daily struggle in our life between our will and that of the Most High, and between our discretion and desire and those of the Almighty, we do need the law and external guidance, and the whole reasoning of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans seems to be absolutely fallacious, and Jesus appears to be the true Messenger of God in saying:—

> "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least Commandments and shall teach them so, he

shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus in these words taught Islam—the gospel of obedience and commandment. But His religion saw its first perversion at the hand of St. Paul, which became complete at the Council of Nice. God sent Muhammad as the comforter to guide the world unto all truth (St. John xvi. 7, 8). He taught the religion of God in its true proportion.

To bring complete death on our own passions and desires is the baptism with fire. If we succeed in doing so, we are in the position to imbue ourselves with Divine attributes, this being baptism with the Holy Ghost. Like an iron in the fire, we lose our own colour and attributes, and become like fire; heat exudes from us and we perform all its functions. When that stage is reached, God becomes as our limbs and joints, our hands are His hands, our eyes are His eyes, and our feet are His feet. We work wonders and perform miracles. If Christianity in its present form produces such results, Baptism in the Cross is baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire, and if these things have become extinct in the annals of the Christian Church, and the old records are new stories and myths, the baptism referred to by John the Baptist was Islam.

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